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ABSTRACT

This document reports on a study conducted to assess (1) the status of health science graduates of Towson State University (Maryland) and (2) their impressions of the value of courses offered within the department as they pertained to their present health education job positions. Seventy-three graduates from the period 1971 to 1976, grouped according to specialization (school health education, community health education, or dual major) were polled on occupational record since graduation, job descriptions, reasons for choosing/leaving a job, salary, major, and opinion of course work value. Results showed that 23 graduates were employed within six months of graduation, earnings ranged from five to ten thousand dollars/year, 35 percent were employed at the time of the survey, and dual majors more often chose teaching rather than nonteaching positions. The professional preparation blocks were ranked as of most value in the educational program. Dual majors were most prevalent and apparently the most successful in obtaining both teaching and community health positions. For single majors, the employment situation was not found encouraging. Recommendations stemming from the survey urged that the department (1) reevaluate its advisement to majors, (2) consider the impact of specific courses with regard to redefining the curriculum and numbers of sections of those courses being offered, and (3) discuss with other departments possible ways to improve the meaning of their courses. (MJB)

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FOLLOW UP STUDY OF HEALTH SCIENCE GRADUATES

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FOLLOW UP STUDY OF HEALTH SCIENCE GRADUATES

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From 1973 recommendations of the National Council for the Accrditation of Teacher Education (NCATE) upon evaluation of Towosn State University, there appeared to be a need to formally follow up the careers of graduates. The Health Science Department had never attempted a formal follow up study since it had begun graduating majors in 1971. Currently anticipating another NCATE evaluation in the next three years, the administration encouraged departmental self-study.

Purpose

This study was conducted to (1) assess the status of health science graduates and (2) their impressions of the value of courses offered within the department as they pertained to their present health education job position.

Subjects

The subjects of this research project were all 73 undergraduate health science graduates of Towsbn State University graduating between June,1971 and June, 1976. They self-selected themselves into three groups according to their specialization (school health education, community health education, or dual major). Since

the program had undergone numerous changes over this time as to the number and kinds of specializations available, it was impossible to determine prior to the data collection how many elected each specialized major.

Hypotheses

The hypothesis for this study was that health science graduates are employed within six months of college graduation in jobs for which they have been trained according to their specialized major.

A sub-hypothesis stated that those health science graduates who are currently employed in health education jobs regardless of major will be greater in number than those health science graduates who are not employed in health education jobs. This is to say that our graduates are most likely to be employed in jobs that are health related.

The independent variable in this study was the specialization within the major and the dependent variable was the employment status.

Procedures

The procedures in this study were as follows:

1. A questionnaire was developed to include occupational record and dates of employment since graduation, job descriptions, reasons for choosing/leaving a job, salary, major, and a Likert scale on the value of the courses required in the major.

2. The questionnaire was piloted on a random sample of 20 December, 1976 graduates of the health science department.

3. After revisions were made, the questionnaire was mailed to the subjects in self addressed stamped envelopes.

4. Follow up mailings were done and phone calls made to ensure as high a return as possible.

5. The returns were tabulated and coded.

Analysis of the data

The data was analyzed using frequencies and the chi square statistic. Computer use was provided by the Maryland State College Information Center.

Results

In assessing the status of the graduates, the following results occurred:

1. Of the 73 graduates surveyed, 52 (72.6%) responded; 4 majored in school health education, 13 majored in community health education, and 35 were dual majors.

2. The average salary was in the $5,000-9,999 range. This included those who were unemployed.

3. Five had Master's degrees and a majority of the respondents (38) had no further graduate education.

4. It was significant at α .01 that 23 of the majors responding were employed within six months of graduation in jobs for which they had been trained (chi square= 46.14 with 10 df)

TABLE 1

JOBS HELD WITHIN SIX MONTHS OF GRADUATION
ACCORDING TO MAJOR

POSITION	MAJOR			
	School Health	Community Health	Dual	Total
School Health Teaching Health	2			2
Dual Major Teaching Health			12	12
Dual Major in Community			4	4
Community Health in Community		5		5
Other	2	6	16	24
Unemployed		2	3	5
Total	4	13	35	52

p. 4

5. The most common reason cited for choosing their first job was that it related to their major.

6. The most common reason cited for leaving, among those who changed jobs, was to pursue another field.

7. The most common reason cited for their current choice in employment was that it related to their major.

8. Exactly half of the respondents (26) are currently employed in jobs for which they have been trained. The remaining half (26) are currently engaged in activities that are not related to their major although three of these are teaching in the public schools but are not teaching health education. Dual majors in health education jobs were more likely to choose teaching rather than non-teaching positions(see Table 2).

Besides evaluating whether or not the health graduate received a job in his/her field, the researchers were also concerned with the preparation that was given to the student with regard to courses taken in the undergraduate program. Those participating in the survey were asked to assess the value of the courses that were taken at Towson in relationship to the present job that they hold. In analyzing the data it should be reported that the sample size was limited to those who had found health education jobs and who completed that part of the questionnaire(24).

The findings were evaluated on a scale of 1-5; one being of no value and five being the most valuable, three being neutral. The results showed that:

TABLE 2

JOBS HELD CURRENTLY ACCORDING TO MAJOR

POSITION	MAJOR School Health	Community Health	Dual	Total
School Health Teaching Health	1			1
Dual Major Teaching Health			11	11
Dual Major in Community			8	8
Community Major in Community		6		6
School Health Teaching Other	1			1
Dual Major Teaching Other			2	2
Other	1	3	12	16
Unemployed	1	4	2	7
Total	4	13	35	52

p. 6

1. Those persons who were dual majors or school health majors and are currently teaching health in the schools found the school health preparation courses to be the most valuable. "Health Education in the Schools I and II" were rated as being very valuable for those now teaching health as compared to those in the community. Content courses also were rated high in value by those teaching health education. Among these were "Drugs in Our Culture," Sex Education and Family Life," "Nutrition," "Human Sexuality," Parental and Child Health," First Aid," and "Current Health Problems."

2. Those persons who were dual majors or community majors and were presently working in community health, found their final preparation courses to be of the most value. "Principles and Practices of Community Health," "Preparation for Field Work," and "Ecological Aspects of Health" all had a high value rating.

3. Regardless of major or current employment the field experience courses, "Community Health Field Work" and/or "Student Teaching" ranked as the most valuable as they pertained to present occupations.

4. Those individuals that were employed in either the school or the community also found the science background to be helpful in their present jobs. Those courses that proved to have high values were "General Biology," "Human Anatomy and Physiology I and II," "Medical Microbiology", and "General Chemistry."

5. Those persons in community health considered the "Basic Statistics" course more valuable in their present capacity than did those working in the school health setting.

6. All those required to take the education courses to be certified in the State of Maryland (school and dual majors) equally agreed that they were of no value in their present jobs.

7. The final course that is required for school and dual majors but not community health majors is "Health Seminar." Interestingly it was found to be of value to those in the community health major who elected it but of little value to those in the school or dual major.

Summary and Conclusions

A survey of 52 out of 73 graduates of an undergraduate program in health science showed that 23 of the majors were employed within six months of graduation in jobs for which they had been trained. Based on the 52 persons responding to a mailed questionnaire, this was a significant number. This, however represented 31% of the total population. The majors numbered greater in the dual track, were earning $5,000-9,999/year, were not pursueing graduate studies, selected jobs related to their major or went into another field. Half of the respondents or 35% of the total population are currently employed in health education jobs. Dual majors in health education jobs are more likely to choose teaching rather than non-teaching positions.

Those who are currently employed in health education jobs were asked to state the value of undergraduate courses required of their major as they pertained to their present job. The professional preparation block of courses in school and community health and their respective field assignments were of the most value. Of those

currently teaching in the schools, courses in Drugs, Sex Education, Nutrition, Human Sexuality, Parental and Child Health, First Aid and Current Health Problems were the most valuable content courses in their present occupation. The community health majors also felt that the required course, Ecological Aspects of Health, was helpful. The summary course, Health Seminar, was of little value to those in the school and dual track but valuable to those majors not required to take it.

The results were predictable. The dual majors are the most prevalent and also are apparently the most versatile in obtaining both teaching and community health positions. For those who specifically major in only school or community health, the employment situation is not encouraging. This is somewhat contrary to the accepted thought that a person who gets their "on-the-job" training for a longer period of time has a chance to develop more sophisticated skills than those who are exposed to the training for shorter periods. The school and community health majors do their field assignments for 16 weeks. The dual majors split their assignments into two 8 week blocks. It would appear that the more diversified person rather than the specialist has a better chance of obtaining the health education position.

Based on this study it is recommended that the Health Science Department reevaluate its advisement to majors, consider the impact of specific courses with regard to redefining the curriculum and numbers of sections of those courses being offered, and discuss with other departments possible ways to improve the meaning of their courses.